

# *The National Gallery*



I'm going to talk about the National Gallery because it is a place where various works of different artists are collected and it demonstrates the influence of art in all the world. Moreover I think art is a simple but deep to show feelings, moods, thoughts because not all things can be explained with words. It is sometimes a way to escape from reality and to find a temporary peace within ourselves.

The **National Gallery** of London was founded in 1824 when the English Government bought 36 paintings from a banker called John Julius Angerstein. Although at the beginning the collection was modest, it is now a temple of art works with over 2300 paintings of extraordinary beauty dating from the middle of the XII century to the present day.



In 1906 Velazquez's painting "***Venus and Cupid***" was one of various works obtained by the National Gallery. The theme is inspired by Roman mythology. Venus is laying down on a bed; Cupid is in front of her giving a mirror. The goddess is completely naked and portrayed by a back view because of the Spanish inquisitions of the period. The chromatic contrast is evident between warm tones at the top and cold ones at the bottom. The pasty and vivid colours of grey, light blue and red stand out more on the soft complexion of the goddess. The subject is mythological and it wants to represent the divine who is hiding in aspects of normal everyday life.

**"The Baptism Of Christ"**, painted by Piero Della Francesca and **"Bacchus and Ariadne"**, by Tiziano had arrived a few years before at the National Gallery.



Piero della Francesca's *The Baptism of Christ* is a timely painting. Piero's arched image was originally part of an altarpiece in a church in Sansepolcro, his hometown in Tuscany. There is a ruling central vertical – the dove of the Holy Spirit, hovering with wide-spread wings directly over Jesus' head, placed exactly above the trickle of baptismal water, which is aligned with Jesus' divided beard, praying hands and navel. But if one asks what is the single largest thing in the picture, it's something else: the foliage of the tree. It's the most peculiar aspect of the painting. We don't really notice it, as it spreads over the scene below, joining in with the curving frame (and the tree behind it) to make a protective arch. Of course, art historians have noticed it. They have identified it as a walnut tree.



This picture portrays the first encounter between Bacchus (god of wine), and Ariadne (daughter of King Minos), on the island of Naxos. Despite her vital role in helping him to defeat the minotaur, Ariadne has been deserted by her lover Theseus, whose ship can be seen (far left of the picture) sailing away into the distance. Her sorrow is interrupted by the sudden arrival of Bacchus and his unruly troupe of drunken friends. She sees Bacchus leaping from his chariot and their eyes meet: it is love at first sight. Bacchus leaps down from his chariot, drawn by two cheetahs, and declares his love. He promises to be a more faithful partner than Theseus and offers her a constellation of stars (Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown) as a wedding gift.

Finally, "**Sunflowers**", drawn by Vincent Van Gogh arrived in 1924.



Vincent Van Gogh had been living in Paris for two years when he decided to move to Arles in 1888. He rented a room in a Yellow house and he shared the flat with Paul Gauguin but the cohabitation wasn't easy. While living there he painted "**Sunflowers**". They expressed Van Gogh's passion for brightness of the Provence's sun. The flowers are messy, disorganized and exaggerate a symbolic meaning, metaphor of nature. The final result is a lively and joyful picture but at the same time is also anguishing.

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